

THE HOT SPOTS

The 14 designated hot spots are located in all four quadrants of the District of Columbia and in six of the seven police districts. The individual neighborhoods vary by geography and neighborhood characteristics. Many (but not all) have sizable concentrations of public or Section 8 housing. Others are anchored by a commercial corridor. Most have entrenched drug markets.

One thing all of the hot spots share in common is an intolerably high rate of crime.

In identifying the 14 hot spots, the DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) examined the rates of homicide, robbery and serious assault, as well as levels of nonviolent crime, calls for police service and arrests that occurred between January 2003 and January 2004. Using sophisticated crime mapping and



analysis technology, the MPD pinpointed the 14 areas with the highest concentrations of crime and violence. For example, the hot spots together accounted for approximately 1 out of every 6 homicides committed in DC during the period analyzed, although they represent only a small fraction of the District's land area and population.

The total number of hot spots and the geographical area of each one was kept relatively small. This helped to ensure that police and other resources could be focused on the most challenging problems in the most troubled areast. The District committed to maintaining the 14 hot spots for at least one year, at which time the existing boundaries will be evaluated and new hot spots considered.

NEXT STEPS:  
CREATING NEW COMMUNITIES

With crime and violence reduced, the targeted areas are in a stronger position not only to maintain the gains that have been made, but also to be transformed into “New Communities,” which is the next step in the Hot Spot Initiative.

The goal of New Communities is to revitalize neighborhoods by decreasing the concentration of poverty and crime in DC’s most challenged, high-poverty communities. It strives to create mixed-income neighborhoods by replacing severely distressed housing with redesigned mixed-income housing for low income and middle-income families. New Communities takes a holistic approach to dealing with the physical, social and economic development of neighborhoods. It strives to strengthen families by providing them with opportunities for education, training, jobs and childcare.

New Communities leverages public resources—including capital, land, transportation, health and social services, and education—to support physical and human development in high-poverty areas. At the same time, New Communities seeks to reduce violent crime even further through the continuation of proven crime reduction strategies.

CONTACTS

For more information about DC’s Hot Spot Initiative:

Ani Russell, Director  
Policing for Prevention  
Metropolitan Police Department  
300 Indiana Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 727-1585  
annie.russell@dc.gov

Dr. Patrick Canavan, Director  
Office of Neighborhood Services  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004  
(202) 727-5146  
patrick.canavan@dc.gov



Anthony A. Williams, Mayor



Charles H. Ramsey, Chief of Police



in Partnership with the  
Office of Neighborhood Services



FROM

Hot Spots

TO

NEW  
COMMUNITIES

A MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH TO  
COMBATING CRIME AND  
TRANSFORMING NEIGHBORHOODS  
IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



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INTRODUCTION

In February 2004, Mayor Anthony A. Williams launched an innovative and aggressive program to combat crime and rebuild some of the District of Columbia’s most troubled neighborhoods. Called the “Hot Spot Initiative,” the effort brings together the police, a range of other city government agencies, and the private and non-profit sectors for a focused assault on both crime and the underlying conditions that can breed crime in 14 geographically compact “hot spots” located throughout DC.



Under the leadership of City Administrator Robert C. Bobb and Chief of Police Charles H. Ramsey, the Hot Spot Initiative has produced impressive results in a very short period of time. During the initiative’s first 10 months, reported crime in the 14 hot spots had declined 23 percent, with violent crime down 34 percent. At the same time, quality-of-life problems have been addressed and new social, recreational and economic development services have been developed—all in an effort to transform the hot spots into new communities.



HOW IT WORKS

The Hot Spot Initiative is a natural outgrowth of the District’s community policing strategy, called Policing for Prevention (PFP). Under Policing for Prevention, DC’s neighborhoods are organized into 45 Police Service Areas, or PSAs. In each PSA, the police officers, residents and other community stakeholders identify the top crime problems in their communities, and jointly develop and implement problem-solving strategies to address those problems.

The Hot Spot Initiative drills down this problem-solving process to an even more focused and compact geographical area. Perhaps most importantly, the initiative expands the resources—governmental, private and non-profit—that can focus on the community’s crime and disorder problems.

The Hot Spot Initiative is operated jointly by the Metropolitan Police Department and the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services. In each hot spot, the MPD assigns additional patrols (vehicle, bicycle and foot), deploys specialized units (such as narcotics, gangs, prostitution and vehicle theft), conducts criminal investigations and manages problem-solving efforts. Neighborhood Services coordinates the efforts of other government agencies through individual Neighborhood Services Coordinators assigned to each of DC’s eight wards.

Depending on the nature of the problems in each hot spot, a combination of the following resources may also be used:

- Regulatory agencies such as the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Services enforce building and commercial establishment codes.

- Infrastructure agencies such as the Departments of Public Works and Transportation clean trash and graffiti, tow abandoned cars and fix street lights and traffic signals.
- Recreational and human services agencies provide a range of facilities and programs that meet the communities needs.
- Economic development agencies conduct job fairs, training and other services to enhance employment and commercial development.
- Prosecution agencies ensure that criminal cases of high importance to the community are given special attention.
- Community stakeholders—including clergy, businesses, social services and others—provide a range of intervention services and programs for youth, families and seniors.

Throughout the process, residents, community leaders and other stakeholders are kept apprised of ongoing developments in the hot spots. The community provides ongoing feedback and assistance.



RESULTS CITYWIDE

While crime in DC is declining across the board, it is falling even more sharply in the 14 hot spots.

From February through November 2004, violent crime in the 14 hot spots combined had declined 34 percent, when compared with the same period of 2003. That compares with a 14 percent reduction in violent crime citywide. All but one hot spot has seen a double-digit reduction in violence. Some hot spots have experienced reductions as high as 50-60 percent.

Overall crime—including both violent and property offenses—is also down in the hot spots. Combined, the 14 areas have experienced a 23 percent reduction in serious crime, compared with a 12 percent drop citywide.



	Violent Crime			Property Crime			Overall Crime		
	2003	2004	% Change	2003	2004	% Change	2003	2004	% Change
Total Hotspots	458	302	-34%	516	449	-13%	974	751	-23%
Total Citywide	7,211	6,234	-14%	24,636	21,868	-11%	31,847	28,102	-12%

SURSUM CORDA: A NEW COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING

Sursum Corda is a large housing development located about two miles due north of the US Capitol. For years, the community endured open-air drug markets, violence and a lack of opportunities. Then in January 2004, a 14-year-old girl—who may have been a witness in an earlier homicide—was executed inside a friend’s home in Sursum Corda.

A community in desperate need of help and hope, Sursum Corda was designated as one of the 14 hot spots.

The first step was to reclaim the area from drug dealers and violent criminals—many of whom lived in other areas but came to Sursum Corda to ply their trade. Working with the US Attorney’s Office and its Project Safe Neighborhoods, the Metropolitan Police Department developed a list of approximately four dozen individuals known to frequent Sursum Corda who were either wanted or on probation or parole. When these individuals were observed engaging in illegal activity or violating the conditions of their release, they were arrested and prosecuted. This strong and swift action is sending a strong message to other would-be offenders in the area that illegal behavior will not be tolerated. Police presence was also increased through an “overtime detail” in Sursum Corda, as well as expanded foot and bicycle patrols.

Cleaning up the area—making it less hospitable to crime—was another priority. Dozens of abandoned cars were towed from the area. Street lights and traffic signs were repaired or replaced. Trash was picked up and graffiti removed. The DC Housing Authority increased police patrols and monitored leases more stringently.

Social, health and recreational services have also been expanded. These have included a health and fitness expo, drug and violence prevention seminars, midnight basketball and a “Community In Unity” street fair. And because Sursum Corda lacked a safe and adequate playground for young residents, a coalition of organizations and community volunteers came together for one day in July 2004 to construct a playground in the heart of the community. Police and community leaders are also working to organize ongoing, joint public safety efforts.

The results have been dramatic: violent crime in the Sursum Corda hot spot is down 43 percent when compared with the same time period a year earlier. As importantly, the community has a new sense of hope for the future.

